

MEMORANDUM

TO: Current RTP Project Sponsors/Prospective 2012 RTP Grant Applicants

FROM: Beth R. Shumate

DATE: May 11, 2012

RE: Recreational Trails Program (RTP) Update

This memo is in response to the various inquiries I've recently received from many of you concerning the Program. There are several items to update you on, so I have included all of them in a single comprehensive format. The items include the following:

- Transition to an Online Grant Application System

 For the upcoming RTP grant cycle we will implement an on-line grant management system. A private contractor specializing in these applications has been working with several agencies within the State of Montana to implement the systems. The software is known as "WebGrants" and it has been successfully implemented in many other states for applications just as we have here in Montana for our RTP grants. I have been working with the private contractor and my counterparts in other agencies on the new system over the winter months. Beginning this year we will not be dealing with the traditional paper applications, distribution of copies, and mailings. The entire grant management processes will be online, which will streamline the grant application and management processes. The new system will also accommodate the on-going grant management, financial tracking, and reporting steps. I anticipate that we'll transition the entire reimbursement/claims process to the "WebGrants" system later this year, but for the short-term, the new system will only apply to the upcoming RTP grant application process. The application section of the online system will be "live" on June 15.
- RTP Grant Deadline is August 1st Due to the implementation of the online grant system and the fact that the federal RTP funds will not be available until early 2013 (at the

soonest), it makes sense to provide applicants a bit more time on the front-end. Thus, the 2013 RTP grant deadline is **August 1**.

- Other Grant Programs Going On-Line Next Year The RTP is the first of our programs to implement the online grant application and tracking system. We anticipate the Off-Highway Vehicle (OHV) and Snowmobile Programs to be online in 2013.
- Training Sessions Available: A hands-on training will be offered for all prospective RTP grant applicants and current project sponsors on June 15 from 9:00 a.m.-12:30 p.m. and on June 16 from 9 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. in the FWP Commission Rooms here in Helena. You can opt to attend either training session; you are not expected to attend both sessions. For those of you that can't attend on the 15th or 16th, a webinar training session will also be made available online for anyone to access at any time.
- <u>Preparation for RTP Grant Submittals</u> In the interim, you can begin preliminary work on your RTP grant application documents by accessing updated documents on the RTP Web page at: http://fwp.mt.gov/recreation/grants/rtp/html. The application narrative questions and scoring criteria (except for the Wildlife/Fisheries Review Forms and Weed Plans, which are no longer required) will remain the same. You should also initiate the appropriate letters of support and complete the environmental review documents for your proposed projects. Please note that we will only accept applications through the online system this year.
- 2012 Grant Cycle Funding Update: In December, 2011, all successful RTP grant recipients from the last grant cycle received notice that approximately 44% of their anticipated grant award amounts received federal appropriations. At this point in time, we have received notice from the Montana Federal Highway Administration office that the Surface Transportation Bill has yet to be reauthorized and that Congress has merely passed a 90-day extension. Thus, the funding situation remains status quo. There is still no firm guarantee of future federal appropriations for the Recreational Trails Program unless and until Congress reauthorizes the Surface Transportation Bill, or continues to pass additional continuing resolutions (extensions).

Due to the incremental funding situation, the remaining RTP funds related to the most recent grant cycle can't be allocated to individual sponsors until Congress takes further action. Once Congress passes additional resolutions and funds are appropriated for the 2012 grant cycle, we will then allocate these additional funds. Thus, as of this date, please plan to proceed with your projects at the current funding level until there further notice that additional funds are available.

Conclusion

On behalf of Montana State Parks, I appreciate your patience as it relates to the most recent RTP grant cycle. Many of you have expressed concerns regarding planning and the upcoming

construction season. Unfortunately, there isn't much that we can do except to remain patient and wait for Congress to take additional action.

Concerning the new online RTP grant application process, this is an exciting time and new opportunity for all of us. Having spent time learning, understanding, and providing input into the design of Montana's system, please be assured that it will make the RTP process simpler for all of us. As humans, change can be apprehensive for all of us. Please be assured this is a change for us too.

If you have any questions or need additional information regarding this information, please feel free to contact me at 444-4585 or bshumate@mt.gov. I also encourage you to access the RTP Web page at: http://fwp.mt.gov/recreation/grants/rtp/html for the most up-to-date information.

Thank you for all of the efforts and hard work you put into Montana's outdoor recreation programs and sites.